

From: Don Ericson
710 Douglas St.
Sturgis, SD 57785
08/26/2008

SEP 02 2008

To: Department of Education
South Dakota Board of Education
700 Governors Drive
Pierre, SD 57501-2291

Dear Board Members:

I am convinced that the proposed changes to 24:43:01:01 will be a significantly positive step for education in South Dakota, and will remedy many of the problems encountered with the 146 hour requirement.

I retired this spring after 43 years of teaching, with the last 14 years in an alternative program for at risk students. During this time I have observed both systems in operation.

The proposed changes allow the implementation of many unique programs, alternative programs, and accelerated programs.

Benefits that I have seen in the competency based system are as follows:

1. Gifted students can progress at their own rate. This permits advanced studies, extra credits, and dual enrollment of courses. Also many of the gifted are bored with traditional classes and do not do the level of work of which they are capable. Some become so dissatisfied that they become discipline problems. Many of the inmates in our prisons are gifted individuals.
2. On-line classes would be easier to implement. This will be a major consideration in light of rising energy costs.
3. Classes which require out of the classroom studies would be a possibility. These would include courses such as geology which are best taught in the fall and spring months.
4. Individualized programs could be developed to meet student needs and goals.

5. Alternative programs for at risk students would benefit from these changes.

However these changes are not without some difficulties. Some students need the structure of the 146 hour class time. Schools will need a method for calculating attendance for state funding. Scheduling could be a problem, and some teachers will find the adjustment difficult.

Overall I am convinced that these changes would positively affect education in South Dakota. These changes will promote a more positive learning environment, with increases in test score and a higher graduation rate. All of the challenges can be overcome with some effort.

Our greatest resource is our children and we must do all that is in our power to provide them with the finest education possible.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Don Ericson". The letters are fluid and connected, with a large initial "D".

Don Ericson